

Message Text

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70

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 EUR-25 AF-10 SSC-01 OMB-01 AID-20 DRC-01 /164 W

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R 271555Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 521

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TEL AVIV 5280

USMISSION USUN NY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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E.O. 11652: N/A DECON 9/27/75

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE CABINET CRISIS

REF: BEIRUT 11654 (NOT SENT JIDDA)

1. BASED ON INFO OBTAINED FROM VARIETY OF LOCAL AND FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS, WE NOW SEE POSSIBILITY THAT PROCESS OF FORMING NEW LEBANESE CABINET MAY BE SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDED WITHIN COMING WEEK, THIS CONCLUSION SUGGESTED BY SIGNS THAT PRES. FRANGIE IS ANXIOUS TO SEE CRISIS RESOLVED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE IN VIEW OF LIKELIHOOD THAT A MORE PROTRACTED PERIOD OF POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY AND CONFUSION WOULD EXACERBATE LEBANON'S ALREADY SERIOUS DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. WE UNDERSTAND PRESIDENT REALIZES THAT HARD DECISIONS WHICH GOL IS LIKELY TO FACE IN COMING MONTHS ON LEVELS OF BOTH INTERNAL AND FOREIGN POLICY WILL REQUIRE STRONGER CABINET HEADED BY STRONGER PRIME MINISTER, AND THAT HE IS WILLING MAKE UNUSUAL (FOR HIM) CONCESSIONS

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TO ACHIEVE THIS.

2. WOULD APPEAR THAT LIKELIEST CANDIDATE FOR PREMIERSHIP, REGARDLESS OF HIS PAST RECORD IN THE JOB, IS NOW THAT WILY SUNNI WARHORSE SAEB SALAM. WE RELIABLY INFORMED THAT SAUDIS HAVE BEEN LOBBYING WITH FRANGIE ON SALAM'S BEHALF IN PAST FEW DAYS. ALSO KNOW THAT KHALIL ABUHAMAD AND OTHER CONFIDANTS OF PRESIDENT HAVE BEEN SUPPORTING SAEB BEY, AND THEY BELIEVE FRANGIE PREPARED TO "COMPROMISE" (WE DON'T KNOW HOW) RE TONY FRANGIE AND GENERAL GHANEM.

3. SHOULD FRANGIE AND SALAM FAIL TO REACH UNDERSTANDING THAT WOULD PERMIT RAPID FORMATION OF NEW GOVT, OUR EARLIER PREDICTIONS OF A PROTRACTED GOVERNMENTAL CRISIS WOULD PROBABLY HOLD TRUE. FIELD WOULD THEN BE THROWN OPEN TO COMPLEX AND TIME-CONSUMING POLITICKING BY HOST OF INTERESTED PARTIES. WE NOTE THAT KAMAL JUMBLATT IS ALREADY DOING HIS BEST TO CALL INTO QUESTION LEBANON'S ENTIRE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE (ALTHOUGH IN VIEW OF SOME QUALIFIED OBSERVERS HE MIGHT BE WILLING TO SUPPORT SALAM'S CANDIDACY IN RETURN FOR PRESIDENTIAL AND SAUDI FAVORS). IN ADDITION, SHIITE IMAM MUSA AS SADR -- A NEW FACTOR ON LEBANESE POLITICAL SCENE--IS TRYING HARD TO MAKE HIS INFLUENCE FELT AS CABINET-FORMING PROCESS PROCEEDS.
GODLEY

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